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his fourth or fifth month, he is reprimanded for laziness if late in sitting up, and when he is taught to walk his parents call out: "Come, lazy one! Come on!" He receives no physical punishment, however, until somewhat older. Thus, for example, if after a child can crawl he is told not to go beyond the threshold, he is scolded the first two or three times he disobeys, but after this he is beaten with a small stick on the buttocks or thighs. Similar means are used to teach him at the same age not to go near the fire, to avoid the thorny cacti used to fence gardens, not to put things in his mouth, and — especially because of black magic — not to pick up anything from the ground. Training for bowel and bladder control is begun shortly after birth and is continued at every opportunity the mother may have to pick up the child, so that he is usually fairly well trained when a year old, though complete control is achieved only after two years or more. A child who wets his mat is beaten, but "not too hard."

Baptism takes place when all is in readiness for the ceremony, a matter of a month or two after birth, unless the child is seriously ill, in which case he is baptized immediately. The fee of 2.50 gourdes to the civil officer who registers the birth is paid by the father. The godfather pays a similar amount to the priest for baptizing the infant, and in addition, if he desires and is able, he may both aid the godmother in meeting the expenses of dressing the child and give the mother a gift. The godmother furnishes the child with a shirt, a dress, a bonnet — "a pretty one" — stockings, shoes, and, if she can afford it, silk for a ribbon-trimmed coverlet. These gifts are obligatory, and even where a hasty baptism of a sick child has made it impossible to provide properly for his outfitting, if he survives, his mother is given a present of money by both godparents so she can procure this finery.

As in most Catholic countries, the godparents play an important role in the life of their godchild. Not only do they "stand in the place of father and mother" at his baptism, but

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● 608 remembrances are expected from them on birthdays or saints' days, while the young person, when older, often brings his problems to them, knowing that they will give him their most disinterested advice. A man may turn to his godparents for aid before asking it of his family, for they are regarded as truest of friends. Nor does he stand in awe of them as he does of his older relations. There is a free joking give-and-take between godparent and godchild, which reflects this attitude of warm affection. A person even stands in a special relationship to the children of his godparents, calling them "baptismal brothers" or "baptismal sisters." Among the peasants, though not among the inhabitants of the larger centers, not only marriage but even those non-Church unions otherwise socially sanctioned are founded upon between "baptismal brothers and sisters." And Mirebalais has it that when Church marriage is contemplated by two such individuals, special authorization from the Archbishop must first be obtained.*

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608 Saturday is the day favored for baptism, permitting as it does the child to be brought to town on a market day. The mother rarely attends, and usually the father is also absent when the godparents bring the infant to the baptismal font, where the priest gives him his name and receives him into the Church. Later in the day the parents are visited by their friends and relatives, who, if they can afford it, bring gifts for the child and partake of the drinks and refreshments that are provided.

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782 Following the Church baptism at an interval which varies with differing circumstances, the father and mother and the godfather and godmother present the child to the family deities. Arriving at the family habitation the father says:

[539] "Mystères-o, nou' même qui te après Grand Maître protège et delivre, moin vin' remercie nou'. Et en même temps main petite la pou' ga'dé pou' moin. Pas quitté mauvaise lawon gagné l'empè sou' li. Ba li force, santé,

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lighted. Chicken and rice may also be cooked for any god except Gede, while chocolate and rice with milk are favored, since it is said "the loa love desserts" — a commentary on the very immediate and human character of these spirits.

The actual baptism, or "washing of the head," is performed on the third day of the ceremony by a vodun priest or priestess who is a member of the family, though any member who has important loa and the necessary connaissance may officiate if the membership of the family includes no priest.

As at any baptism, there must be a godfather and godmother, and preference is given those who are the parents of twins or are themselves twins. The officiant must be possessed at the

time, since, it is said, "one loa baptizes another." Leaves of the baobab tree are suspended in perfume, water, and the hands of the one who baptizes are first immersed in the liquid;

then, while songs of the loa and canticles of the Virgin are sung, he washes the head of the person to be baptized. Possession occurs immediately, and the new devotee lies back, half

conscious, while all others kneel, seeking word from the loa to learn if it is satisfied. If an affirmative answer is given, all

retire, the person possessed remaining in the room to sleep through the night. A "ball," but not a vodun dance, may

celebrate the event either the next day or later, but this is not obligatory, and most often those present, after eating, quietly

disperse. The following day the one who has been baptized goes to the family place of worship and greets those who have

helped him. Only one further rite is necessary, and this solely when the loa *bonai* is revealed to be a hostile god. Then the

loa, after having been baptized, is "restrained" by being placed in a jar and buried, so it cannot later emerge and

trouble the family of the one to whom it has come.¹⁰

The ceremony of baptism, in Mirebalais, is in no sense a first step into any vodun hierarchy, for, as will be seen, no

such hierarchy exists in this valley. One important priest there derives his power from loa that have never been bap-

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cade for Damballa, a red print for Ogun, and a third, a flowered blue material, for all the other gods, were first made. They were ruffled at the bottom, with strips of the material, attached as are apron-strings, to hold them in place. Four eggs, three "native" candles, three white candles, white flour, corn flour, two cassava cakes, two biscuits, three small-sized loaves of bread, two bottles of *kola*, *clairin*, and holy water, were also provided for the baptism. Finally on the appointed day — a Saturday, so that the drums could afterwards be used for a *vodun* dance — the drums, drumsticks, and iron, with the dresses and the food that had been provided for the ceremony, were taken to the scene of the rite, a habitation where a *tonnelle* had been built for the accompanying dance.

The ceremony began at about five o'clock in the afternoon, the drums being dressed by their godmothers. Just as a child who is to be baptized in church must have godparents, so drums must have their godparents, and following the logic of this position, since the owner of the drums is regarded as their father, he uses the terms *compère* and *commère* for those who have "stood up" with his drums, just as he would for those who might sponsor his children. The *prêt savanne* first called for some twigs from an orange tree and a bit of cotton, as the drums, standing on end, were covered with a clean white cloth. Grouped about them and ranged behind the officiant were the owner and godparents of the drums, holding lighted candles in their hands, with which they made the sign of the cross from time to time. As the prayers began, the participants crossed themselves, and the *prêt savanne* sprinkled the drums with holy water, using a spray of orange-leaves. Among his prayers were the Credo, the Ave Maria, the Pater Noster, and the Salve, interspersed with hymns sung by the assembled group. After about half an hour of prayer the officiant, holding an egg in his hand, made the sign of the cross three times over each of the drumheads. Ordinarily the eggs would have been broken, their contents rubbed on the drum-

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- Price-Mars (I), 206, note 1, and Wirkus, 215, define the term *combite*.
- Wirkus, 51, 288, differentiates these work-drums from other types.
- Wirkus, 191, has described the efficiency with which an organized Haitian work-group accomplished its task on the road.
- Cf. Price-Mars (I), 146-8.
- A good description of a Haitian market as observed in 1835 is to be found in Hanna, 53-6.
- Compare Mackenzie, i, 28-9.
- The poverty of the Haitians is often exaggerated, and especially the concept of wealth as held by the peasant is caricatured in a way that accentuates a misunderstanding of his economic psychology. For an extreme instance of this see Craige, 42-3.

CHAPTER V

- Price-Mars (I), 34, speaks of the need immediately after birth of "immersing the newborn infant in a lustral bath carefully concocted by the *vodun* priest who consecrates the child to the divinity that can preserve him against the evil-doing of malignant spirits, and rescue him from 'the power of supernatural ill.'"
- Craige, 68-9, and Wirkus, 97-9, both give accounts of wayside births in which the mothers resumed their journeys immediately after bearing their children.
- Price-Mars (I), 34, says: "It is forbidden to speak aloud the 'baptismal' name of a child under certain circumstances, above all during the night."
- Parsons (I), 174, notes that "an infant born with teeth is one whose birth has been delayed so long by the *marasa* [twins] that the teeth have developed."
- Price-Mars (I), 235, derives the importance of the god-mother from the conditions of slavery, when a child was often cared for by a foster-mother. See also St. Mery, i, 35-6, and Mackenzie, i, 273-4.

CHAPTER VI

- The institution of *plapage* is mentioned in passing by Craige, 203-4; and, with complete lack of understanding, by Wirkus, 75 and 307.

Songs of Complaint and Gossip 139

That friend there, he is not a friend for me!
 That friend there, he is not a friend for me, treason!
 I put his house, he gives me a chair to sit in!
 He goes around speaking bad words about me!

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Or again, you may hear:

Nty' wèl, con ça ou yé, ago-é!
 Nty' wèl, con ça ou yé!
 Yap mangé avé ou!
 Yap bout avé ou!
 Yap koupé lavie ou débort! (Ex. 95)

Black man, like this you are, ago-é!
 Black man, like this you are!
 He will eat with you,
 He will drink with you,
 He will cut the life out of you!

A man regards his child's godfather as his closest friend outside the family circle. Should either of the two friends fail to fulfill the high standard of behavior demanded by their tie, the other may express disappointment and recrimination, as in this song:

Compé à moin compé ou malhonête!
 Ou malhonête compé compé à moin compé ou malhonête!
 Premier pié moin fai'm ba ou bouté!
 Malheur riv'm nan hounfor ou pas vini wè moin!

My comrade, comrade, you are dishonest!
 You are dishonest comrade, my comrade, comrade, you are dishonest!
 I gave you my first child to baptize!
 When misfortune comes to me in the hounfor, you do not come to see me!

Sometimes even the most domestic of grievances are aired in public through means of song:

Iumie oh!
 Se Hèlme oh!
 Iumie oh!
 Se Hèlme oh!
 Trois paires soufflet mari'm ba moin!
 Maladie à poud moin! (Ex. 96)

Iumie, oh!
 Se. Hèlme, oh!
 Iumie, oh!
 Se. Hèlme, oh!
 Three pairs of slaps my husband gave me!
 This misfortune has taken me!

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